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Cats of the Group

Streaming River

Leader: Sparrow-dark gray tom with white markings, green eyes, bob tail, and tufts of fur on his ear tips.

Second-In-Command: Storm-light gray she-cat with dark blue eyes. One eye is lighter with a scar slashed through it, causing her to be blind in that eye. Long tail, and scars all over her pelt.

Other members:

Sundown: Orange tom with yellow markings, red ears and paws, and green eyes.

Sky: Brown she-cat with white dapples.

Rose: Pink-ish she-cat with darker markings.

Cloud: Fluffy white tom with bright blue eyes.

Leaf: Calico she-cat.

Swift: White tom with black splatters and amber eyes.

Holly: Jet-black she-cat with bright green eyes.

Rust: Orange tom with black dapples, black ears, white paws, and green eyes.

Badger: Black and white tom.

Shadow: Black she-cat with one green eye, one gray, and white paws.

Ash: Gray she-cat with orange dapples, and orange tufts of fur on her ear tips.

Ice: Black tom with white tail tip and paws and slicing blue eyes.

Cats outside of the group:
Blaze: Brown she-cat with thick, fluffy fur and green eyes and green ear tips.

Axel: White scarred tom with green eyes and a bright green spiked collar.

Poison: Bright green tom with purple markings and a pink collar.

Cherry: Pretty drown dappled she-cat with light-yellow eyes and a blue collar.

Oak Spot: Brown tom with white dapples.

Hex: White she-cat with purple drips and a gray eye.

Luna Strike: White she-cat with green markings and purple eyes.

Razor: Orange tom with brown markings.

Others un-named.

Chapter 1

Ash was walking through the alleyway. All around her, cats swarmed, hissing and yowling. She flicked her ear. Everyone was extra snappy due to the lack of prey. A cold breeze whistled past the tall humansfolk buildings, causing Ash to fluff up her thick coat. *The warm season is late this year. It's been raining nonstop, and the wind isn't helping.* She took her gaze up to the cloudy sky. It showed no sign if breaking up for some sunlight. She shook her head and started down the pathway towards her den. Her siblings would be there by now. As she made her way down the hill of roads and buildings, she began to hear the sound of cats fighting. This time, she could easily identify each of them.

"Sundown! Rose! Knock off the nonsense!", a hiss sounded from behind Ash. She turned to see her older sister, a fluffy black she-cat, behind her, quickly walking up to the fighting cats. "Holly! Thank goodness! Sundown was trying to steal my mouse!", Rose squeaked. Ash saw Sundown roll his eyes. Sundown was a tom Ash was actually close to. Sundown was born in a humansfolk den, but he ventured out and joined the group only a few seasons ago. He and Ash quickly got along. As Ash was thinking about it, Sundown only ever acted kind to her. She didn't understand why, but there was definitely something only Ash could see in Sundown the others couldn't, but she can't seem to lay a claw on it. She shook her head, and went on over to Sundown.

Sundown turned his angry gaze towards Ash, and his expression instantly turned calm. "Hey, Ash.", he meowed. Ash could tell he was still tense. "What did I just see back there?", Ash said with a bit of amusement in her mew. Sundown shook his head, his ears flattening. "I was just trying to get some food for us. I know you're getting thin beneath that thick coat of yours. You have been refusing to eat until everyone else had food. It's not healthy." Ash opened her jaws to protest that she wasn't getting thin, but she knew it was useless. She *was* getting thin. "Fair enough.", she mewed. "How about we go hunting instead? I bet my father wouldn't mind us sneaking into the forest for a bit." Ash's father was named Sparrow. He was the current leader of the group, and

was very protective over his kits. Sundown's ears pricked up in surprise. "You're actually willing to go behind his back?", he said, excitement beginning to brighten his gaze.

"Why not? It's just for a hunt or two. He probably won't even notice.", she snorted. She waved her tail towards the exit of the humansfolk town, which was a large gate with enough space underneath it for cats to sneak in and out. Sundown dashed out under the gate, and Ash quickly followed.

As they entered the forest, Ash stopped to drink in the fresh air. As she gazed around, she could see the small bodies of mice. She jumped into a crouch. She crept up on the closest mouse, and within moments, she had it lifeless in her jaws. She purred, buried the prey, and continued on down the forest. As she got deeper into the large gathering of trees, she noticed a strange but familiar sound. She gazed over and saw Sundown following her. With a flick of her tail, she signaled him to be quiet.

Sundown slowed down beside her. Beyond the trees, Ash could hear the sound of water bubbling. "Sundown!", she exclaimed, "Can you hear that?"

"Hear what?", Sundown asked.

"The sound of a creek! There must be one just over here! Come on!", Ash squealed excitedly. She had never gotten a chance to experience water outside of puddles in the humansfolk city. Ash began to dash off, her mind too intent on what the water would be like. Would it be deep? Cold? She was too excited to watch where she was going. All she could see was blurred trees and a sudden dip in the ground. Before she could stop herself, and felt the ground disappear beneath her paws. *Oh no!*

Chapter 2

She fell with a clash into the roaring waters below. She gasped as the cold water surrounded her, soaking her thick fur and dragging her under. The creek wasn't past her ear-tips, but the current was strong. It pulled her downstream faster than Ash could even run.
As she poked up her head, gasping in the air around her, she caught a glimpse of Sundown running towards her before she felt the current fall. A small waterfall had formed when rocks suddenly piled up a long time ago. As Ash fell down into the deepest part of the creek, she spotted Sundown leaping in after her.
Splash! The world suddenly went black for Ash as she and Sundown fell into the calm waters. She could feel herself sink down into the depths of the waters. With a blink, she opened her eyes to Sundown swimming towards her. *Sundown? Why are you following me? Go back to the city.* She closed her eyes once more, waiting for death to take over her. Her lungs were screaming for air, and her heart beat painfully. With a sigh, she fell into darkness.

"Is she waking up?", a voice gasped near her ear. Ash opened her eyes, only to cough up mouthfuls of water. She swayed from side to side. Her head was pounding, and she felt dizzy. She laid back down, and through the blurriness of her gaze, she could see a gray tabby she-cat with green eyes standing over her. She had two feathers behind her ear, which was strange to Ash. "W...who are you?", she croaked. She could see two others standing over her, along with Sundown as her vision improved.

"My name is Stormfeather. These are my sisters, Hailstream,", she pointed with her tail towards a small gray tabby. Her left ear was folded over, but her other ear was normal with a feathered tip. She blinked kindly. "..and Squirrelheart." Stormfeather's tail pointed to a thick-furred ginger tabby she-cat. Squirrelheart's tail was only a small stub, but she looked strong and vicious.
"We are ThunderClan warriors. We found your friend on our territory with you as lifeless as a piece of prey.", Squirrelheart

meowed. Ash groaned in pain. "My head really hurts.", she managed to say. Sundown padded over to her and began grooming her fur. "Your father is going to be so upset.", he growled. Ash rolled her eyes. "I know." She suddenly collapsed into darkness again as her head spun in circles until the world was nothing.

She woke up in a mossy nest in a cave. When she rose her head, she saw a dappled she-cat standing over her. "Hello. I'm Littlekoi. I'm the medicine cat for ThunderClan. Your friend and your rescuers are right outside.", the she-cat meowed. Ash nodded and tried standing up. She instantly fell back into the mossy nest. "You'll be dizzy for quite awhile, young one. You hit your head on something in the water. Probably a rock, considering the size of the wound on your head." With a jolt, Ash realized the throbbing pain of a cut on the back of her head. "When do you think I can do home?", Ash asked as she settled back into her nest. Littlekoi just looked at her. "Well, depending on how you're feeling, a couple days to a moon at most. That wound could open up at any moment. I want to keep a close eye on you until it's completely healed."

Ash nodded. She decided that she had better sleep so she could get better faster. With a yawn, she closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 3

Ash woke up to the sound of a cat entering in the den. The cave was cast in darkness, but as she looked outside, she could see the bright orange of the sunset. The cat who had entered was a brown tabby tom. He looked to be around Ash's age. In his jaws, a rabbit and a mouse hung limp. The tabby set down the prey. "Here you go, Littlekoi. I got you a mouse and the largest rabbit on the pile for the visitor.", he purred. Littlekoi blinked at the young tom. "Thank you, Brackenpaw. Why don't you go say "hello" to our new visitor? While she's here, she might as well make some friends."

Brackenpaw nodded, grabbed the rabbit, and padded over to Ash's nest. She blinked at the tom. "Hello.", she meowed. Brackenpaw set down the rabbit outside of her nest and sat down. "Hello! My name is Brackenpaw. What's yours?"
"My name is Ash.", she answered, "Are you a warrior?"
Brackenpaw shook his head. "No. Though, I will be in a moon or so. I'm only an apprentice, meaning I'm in training to become a warrior. Where are you from?"

Ash blinked. "I'm from a place called Streaming River. Our camp is in a Twoleg city.", she answered, reaching for the rabbit and taking a bite. Brackenpaw blinked in surprise. "I've never heard of that.", he stopped talking suddenly, tilting his head in thought. "Are you going to stay here? You seem like you could be a great warrior!"

Ash purred. "I'm not going to stay here for longer than I need to. My family will be looking for me."

As if her words summoned them, movement sounded from outside the camp. "Where is she?", a yowl sounded from outside. Ash recognized that yowl. *Father!* Using as much strength as she had, Ash dragged herself out of her nest and stumbled into the camp to see her father with his fur spiked. Squirrelheart stood in front of him with bared teeth. "Who are you? How dare you barge into our camp like that?", she hissed. From behind Sparrow, Sundown and Holly walked up. "We came for Ash.", Sundown replied. "We would

like to take her home." Holly nodded in response.

Sparrow began searching the crowd of cats that now circled him. Once he spotted Ash, he ran towards her. Ash looked up at her father, her vision beginning to blur. "Father.", she gasped, blinking frantically.

Sparrow growled and began sniffing her over. Once he found the head wound she now bore, he looked into Ash's eyes, his own sparkling in worry. "What were you thinking, you foolish excuse for a cat? You almost got yourself killed! Who knows how I would've been able to bear it if you died? Come on. We're going home.", he tried shouldering Ash onto her feet, but she just stumbled and landed on the ground again. Littlekoi rushed over to help Ash back up. "I know you're her father and you're worried about her, but she has to stay here for awhile. She's in good care here.", Littlekoi growled, not meeting Sparrow's gaze. Ash's father's eyes widened in surprise at seeing Littlekoi. He opened his mouth to protest, but Littlekoi just hissed at him. "It's best if you leave now." This time, she met his gaze, and Ash could make out the depths of sorrow and betrayal as she stared at Sparrow. The black and white tom muttered, "I'm sorry, Littlekoi." before flicking his ear as he ran towards Holly and Sundown. Within moments, Ash's father, friend, and sister were gone.

Littlekoi helped Ash to her paws and led her back into her nest. Once Ash was settled in, she looked at Littlekoi. "How do you know my father?", she asked.

Littlekoi closed her eyes and looked away. "Some secrets aren't meant to be said.", she whispered before padding out of the den, leaving her alone until Brackenpaw returned with another body of a vole.

Chapter 4

It had been a half-moon since Sparrow, Sundown, and Holly had come to the camp. The dizziness was no longer as extreme and she could now leave the cave den. Since Ash had been feeling better, she spent every moment she could with Brackenpaw when he wasn't out training. Today, Ash had been given permission to go hunting with the brown apprentice. She had started joining in with short clan duties as exercise. Some warriors didn't trust her, but Squirrelheart, whom was recently made deputy due to the last one retiring, made sure to only put Ash with cats who were able to trust her.

"Hey, Ash!", a yowl came from across the clearing. Ash turned to see Brackenpaw racing towards her, dust covering his pelt.

"Well, hi there, Brackenpaw, or should I call you *Dust*paw?", she meowed in laughter as he shook out his pelt.

He narrowed his eyes. "Very funny.", he huffed playfully. After a few moments, he meowed, "Are you ready to go hunting?"

Ash nodded and started padding out of the camp. Brackenpaw stayed by her side. As they entered in the forest, Ash breathed in it's comforting scent. Her mind drifted off to home. What were her siblings doing? Her father? She hoped they were all well. What about Sundown? She shook her head. It didn't matter what they were doing right now. She would be home within a moon. They'll be fine.

Brackenpaw suddenly hissed. Ash skidded to a halt to see what he was looking at. As Ash followed his gaze, she could see a rabbit nibbling on some leaves. Brackenpaw got down into a hunting crouch. He began creeping towards the animal, but suddenly, the rabbit looked upwards. It let out a warning squeal before running straight towards Ash. As quick as she could, she pounced on the rabbit, killing it with a bite to the neck.

Brackenpaw bounced up beside her, blinking warmly. "Great catch!", he purred. Ash grinned. "We did it together.", she meowed.

Brackenpaw picked up the rabbit and scraped earth over it. "Let's go deeper into the forest. Perhaps we'll find something something else.", he sniffed.

Ash nodded, gazing around the forest. "Maybe if we go near the river, we'll find some water vole.", she suggested, started to walk towards that direction.

Brackenpaw followed, and when they reached the river, they saw a vole sitting near the edge. Ash crouched down, slowly stalking towards the rodent. With a leap, she pounced, landing on the vole and killing it instantly.
Ash grabbed the dead vole in her jaws and padded up beside Brackenpaw. Brackenpaw's eyes lit up with admiration at her catch. "You're a terrific hunter.", he purred, pressing his muzzle to her cheek. Ash dropped the vole and nuzzled Brackenpaw. "Thank you.", she meowed. Brackenpaw blinked warmly at her, before nodding towards the prey. "We should return home.", he mewed, picking up Ash's vole. Ash followed him as they went towards the spot they buried the rabbit. Once they had collected their catches, they went back to the camp.

When they got back, the sun was beginning to set in the sky. The entire clan was going about, eating their evening meal. When they entered the camp entrance, they were greeted by Stormfeather and her sister, Squirrelheart.

"Boy, you two must have been hunting for ages!", Stormfeather exclaimed, looking at the rabbit and vole the two have caught. Squirrelheart nodded in agreement. "You two brought back a feast! Goldenstar will hear about this for sure!"

Goldenstar, from what Ash understood, was the leader of the clan and Brackenpaw's mother. As Ash gazed over the clearing, she could see the golden tabby sitting on the Highledge, watching over the clan. Squirrelheart turned around and flicked her ear to Goldenstar, signaling for her to come over. Within moments, the

leader was beside her deputy.

"What is it, Squirrelheart?", Goldenstar meowed as she joined them. Her piercing blue eyes gazed over Brackenpaw and Ash, making Ash feel a chill beneath her pelt.

"These two have brought back some great prey. I believe Brackenpaw is more than ready to become a warrior. He has proven himself over and over again, and even showed our visitor our way of life.", Squirrelheart reported. Beside her, Ash could feel Brackenpaw tense up in surprise. Squirrelheart was Brackenpaw's mentor, and to hear her report this to the leader of the clan, it must've been very exciting for the tabby tom.

Goldenstar nodded in agreement. "I agree. We'll start the ceremony right away." With one final nod, the tabby she-cat bounded towards the ledge, yowling, "Let all cats older than 6 moons gather beneath my den for a clan meeting!"

Brackenpaw dashed off towards the leader, and Ash was left to carry their prey to the pile. Gazing around, she saw Littlekoi waving her tail for Ash to join her. She bounded over to the medicine cat and sat down. When she gazed up at the leader, she could see Brackenpaw beside her. His pelt was glossy. He must've just groomed himself. Ash purred as she looked at her friend. He gazed back at her, and his gaze was shining as bright as the sun. Littlekoi must've been watching her, because the medicine cat nudged her. "I noticed that you and Brackenpaw have been getting really close. Perhaps, closer than friends?"

Ash froze in place. What had the dappled she-cat noticed? She looked at the other she-cat, and opened her jaws, as if to say anything, but was cut off by Goldenstar's yowl.

"Brackenpaw has been a terrific apprentice. He taught our visitor our ways of life and has become a great hunter. Today, I am proud to give this apprentice, my son, his warrior name and status!", Goldenstar said, her voice echoing around the clearing.
"Brackenpaw, do you promise to protect this clan and follow the warrior code, even at the cost of your own life?"

Brackenpaw puffed out his fur and stood up a little taller. "I do!", he meowed.

Goldenstar's gaze shined with emotion. "Then I hereby announce you as a warrior. From this moment on, your name will be Brackenclaw. StarClan honors you for your loyalty and strength. You are now a warrior of ThunderClan!"

Brackenclaw licked his mothers shoulder. Once he turned to face the crowd, they all began cheering.

"Brackenclaw!"

"Brackenclaw!"

"Brackenclaw!"

Ash made sure she was one of the loudest cheering. In her mind, she was thinking over what the medicine cat had said. *Maybe I do think of Brackenclaw as more than a friend.* Throughout the night, as Brackenclaw did his vigil, Ash kept thinking about it, and the more she kept digging deeper into the thought, the more real it seemed to have become.

Chapter 5

Three moons had passed since the ceremony. It was hot and sunny. The summer months had arrived after a long spring. Ash was dozing outside of the medicine den in a patch of sunshine. Her wound was almost healed, and the dizziness was completely gone. When she opened her eyes, she saw Brackenclaw standing over her.

"Wake up, crazy cat.", he purred, bending down to lick her ears. Ash yawned and blinked up at him. "I'm awake.", she purred drowsily. "I have some spare time, and I wanted to go out for a bit with you.", Brackenclaw meowed. Since becoming a warrior, Brackenclaw had been busy. They always went out when he had extra time. Ash nodded and got up, shaking dust from her pelt. "Where would you like to go?"

Brackenclaw flicked his ear. "I was thinking by the lake.", he meowed. "I want to talk to you alone." Ash nodded and followed him out of the camp entrance. They walked quietly towards the lake, and once they got there, Brackenclaw brushed his pelt against Ash's. She looked at him, purring. "What do you need, Brackenclaw?", she asked, looking at him.

He looked at Ash, his amber eyes shining in warmth. "The last couple moons have been amazing with you.", he began. "It may seem crazy, but you're the only one I've gotten close to."

Ash felt her heart quicken. Was that really true? Excitement bubbled inside of her. "Brackenclaw...I feel the same.", she stuttered. Brackenclaw went and stood at the shore of the lake, letting the waves hit his paws. "Ash, I know you aren't a clan cat, but I can't imagine ever finding someone else like you. I want you to be my mate."

Ash's eyes widened and her heart started pounding in joy. "Really?", she murmured. She blinked, feeling warm under her pelt. Brackenclaw looked back at her, wonder in his eyes. Ash lifted her chin and spoke with a purr. "I accept.", she meowed. She saw

Brackenclaw's eyes brighten and he ran over to her, pressing his muzzle against hers. Ash drank Brackenclaw's familiar scent, feeling happier than she ever had.